

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



United States Department of Agriculture

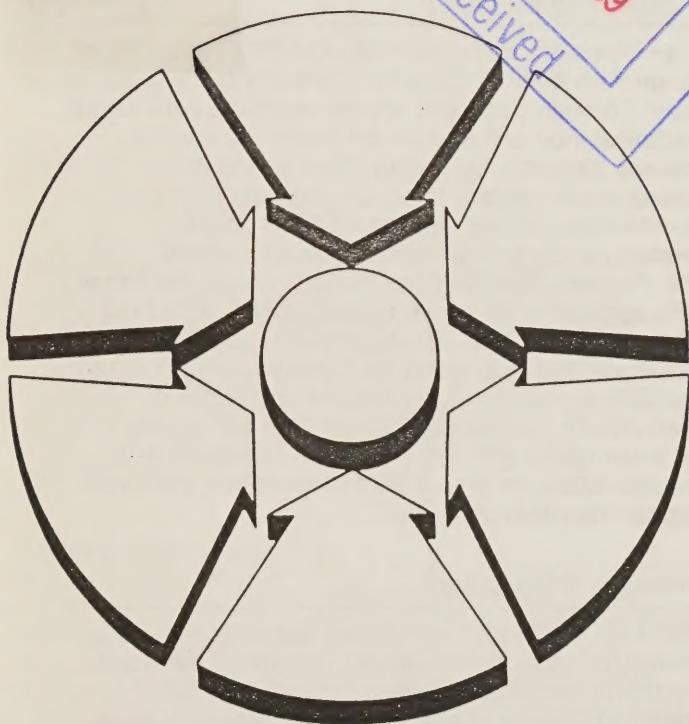
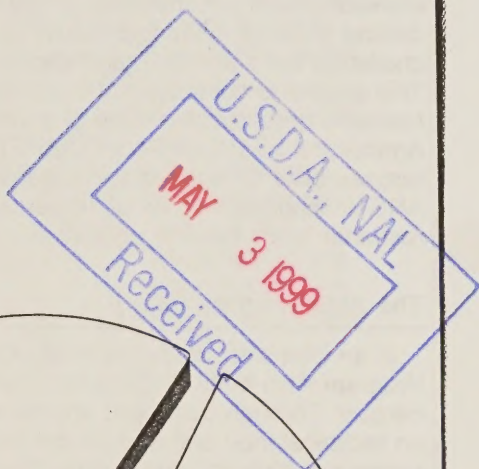
Agricultural Research Service

How ARS Works To Manage Resources

aS441

.H68

1983



How ARS Works To Manage Resources

The challenge to produce and distribute adequate supplies of food towers above all of humanity's problems. Blessed with abundant natural resources, U.S. farmers have used the technologies derived from agricultural research to break barriers to new food production records.

Long-term needs to keep pace with global demands for food, along with the economic plight of the world and its farmers, call for greater efficiency in producing and marketing farm commodities. Those needs and the decline in the quantity and quality of natural resources challenge the entire U.S. agricultural research system. This system is composed of Federal, State, and private research organizations. One of these organizations, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), has the main responsibility for agricultural research at the Federal level. ARS is supported by about 10 percent of the total research funds for U.S. agriculture.

The ARS Program Plan *

In an intensive, agencywide effort, ARS developed the Program Plan that will guide its research into the 21st century. Through basic and applied research, ARS works on technical food and agricultural problems of broad scope and high national priority. Solutions to these problems are necessary to ensure, perpetually, an adequate supply of high-quality food and fiber for America's people and for export to world markets.

The Program Plan identifies the long-range challenges to U.S. agriculture and the approaches ARS would use to meet those challenges. The Administrator of ARS has established policies to guide the agency over the next 6 years. This 6-year Plan identifies the challenges of highest priority and the approaches ARS will employ to meet these challenges within current funding. All ARS managers follow the 6-year Plan in structuring resources to support research programs.

Facilities and Equipment

The ARS facilities for agricultural research are extremely diverse and unequalled throughout the world. Research is conducted at many laboratories and locations that range in size from small stations to large multidisciplinary agricultural research centers.

Most facilities are owned and operated by ARS, but several locations are provided by the U.S. General Services Administration or are leased. Some locations are designed to address research problems with a very specific focus. Others have a wide array of programs that are best addressed by multidisciplinary approaches.

ARS facilities are located throughout the United States and in eight foreign countries so that regional, national, and international problems can be addressed in the most favorable research environment. Many ARS facilities are located on university campuses and State agricultural experiment stations to assure cooperation and interaction with State scientists.

Funds Management

As an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ARS is accountable to the Secretary of Agriculture, to the President, to Congress, and—ultimately to all U.S. citizens. Funds are appropriated by Congress for specific research programs, and ARS allocates those funds—through its regional and area structure—to individual research locations. The research leader at each location is responsible for carrying out the program and for controlling the funds allocated. A centralized accounting system assists ARS managers in disbursing funds. The Administrator maintains a small contingency fund to take care of unforeseen emergencies or to capitalize immediately on major research breakthroughs.

Personnel

Creative, highly motivated scientists are the backbone of the agency. All other resource management is designed to create an environment that fosters scientific creativity. More than 2,600 scientists—ranging from agronomists to zoologists—conduct research to produce new knowledge and technologies for increasing agricultural efficiency. In addition, a recently established Research Associate Program is attracting newly trained, highly motivated scientists for short-term ARS appointment.

Organizational Structure

The National Program Staff, headed by the Deputy Administrator, is responsible for overseeing ARS national programs and establishing broad priorities to guide resource support. A geographically dispersed chain of responsibility starts with the ARS Administrator and goes to four regional administrators, 21 area/center directors, and many research leaders and laboratory chiefs. The regional administrators, working with the area and center directors, are responsible for directly supervising and managing projects in the field. Through this structure, ARS can respond quickly to mandates of Congress or the



1022473037

Executive Branch, to emergency situations of national importance, and to research needs of regulatory agencies.

Management-Information Systems

Efficient resource management increasingly depends upon good information management whereby resources can be matched with program priorities and needs. ARS is benefiting from rapid technological advances in office automation, computer science, and communications in developing truly integrated management-information systems. Through these systems, needed information is quickly available to help managers and scientists reach decisions about resource allocations. These systems also provide information to help develop budgets and to respond rapidly to requests for information from Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, USDA agencies, and other interested groups.